

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4377

S E C R E T ASUNCION 0573

EXDIS

FOR ARA ASSISTANT SECRETARY ROGERS AND AMBASSADOR
MAILLARD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, OAS, PA

SUBJECT: SAPENA PASTOR'S CANDIDATURE FOR OAS SECRETARY
GENERALSHIP

SUMMARY: PARAGUAYAN FONMIN SAPENA PASTOR HAS ASKED ME
FOR MY PERSONAL JUDGMENT AS TO HIS OAS PROSPECTS, AND
FOR THE OFFICIAL USG VIEW. SPEAKING PERSONALLY I HAVE
TOLD HIM I THOUGH HIS CHANCES ARE ALMOST NIL, AND EVEN
IN THE UNLIKELY EVENT HE GOT THE JOB, HE COULD BE A
DIVISIVE FACTOR (AFTER QUITO) AND THE INSTITUTION
WOULD SUFFER AS WOULD HIS VERY GREAT PERSONAL PRESTIGE.
I SUGGESTED HE SEEK A GRACEFUL WAY TO BOW OUT. (READY
EXCUSE DOES IN FACT EXIST: HIS WIFE'S RAPIDLY
DETERIORATING HEALTH.) SAPENA SEEMED TO CONCUR, BUT
WOULD STILL LIKE TO HAVE THE OFFICIAL WASHINGTON VIEW.
PLEASE ADVISE SOONEST. I BELIEVE HE WILL ACCEPT A
SUGER-COATED PILL. END SUMMARY

1. ON MY RETURN TO ASUNCION SAPENA PASTOR CALLED ME
AND ASKED TO COME TO THE RESIDENCE TO DISCUSS QTE A
DELICATE PERSONAL MATTER UNQTE. THE PURPOSE OF HIS TWO-
HOUR VISIT LAST NIGHT WAS TO ASK FOR US GOVERNMENT'S
OFFICIAL AND MY PERSONAL VIEW ON HIS CANDIDATURE.

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2. SAPENA SAID HE HAD TAKEN STOCK CAREFULLY OF HIS

PRESENT STANDING AND HE HANDED ME A LIST THAT SOWED THE FOLLOWING TEN COUNTRIES COMMITTED TO HIM ON THE FIRST BALLOT: BRAZIL; ARGENTINA; URUGUAY; CHILE; BOLIVIA; NICARAGUA; GUATEMALA; SALVADOR; HAITI; PARAGUAY. HE COUNTED FOUR COUNTRIES DEFINITELY FOR GOMEZ BERGES: MEXICO; COSTA RICA; HONDURAS; DOMINICAN REPUBLIC. THE FOLLOWING NINE WERE LISTED AS UNCOMMITTED: UNITED STATES; PANAMA; VENEZUELA; COLOMBIA; ECUADOR; PERU; JAMAICA; TRINIDAD; BARBADOS.

3. HE SAID THAT A POSSIBLE MOVE TO WASHINGTON WOULD BE A TREMENDOUS PERSONAL SACRIFICE FOR HIM. HE WAS WELL OFF FINANCIALLY AND NOT INTERESTED IN THE MONETARY REWARDS OF THE JOB. MOREOVER THE DELICATE HEALTH OF HIS WIFE WOULD MAKE IT PRACTICALLY IMPOSSIBLE FOR HER TO ACCOMPANY HIM. (THIS IS TRUE. A PACE-MAKER WAS JUST BROUGHT IN FOR MRS. SAPENA PASTOR AND A COMBINATION OF ARTERIOSCLEROSIS, HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE AND ARHYTHMIC HEARTBEAT LIMIT HER LIFE EXPECTANCIES SEVERELY). SAPENA SAID THAT HE WAS SERIOUSLY CONSIDERING BOWING OUT OF THE RACE UNLESS THE US GOVERNMENT WAS INTERESTED THAT HE CONTINUE FOR THE GOOD OF THE OAS AND THE US.

4. I TOLD HIM THAT I WOULD UNDERTAKE TO GET OFFICIAL US GOVERNMENT VIEWS IN ANSWER TO HIS QUESTIONS. WHEN HE ASKED FOR MY OWN VIEWS AS AN QTE OLD AND TRUSTED FRIEND UNQTE, I SUGGESTED THAT HE CONSIDER SERIOUSLY (A) WHETHER IN FACT HE HAD A CHANCE TO GET THE NOMINATION AND (B) WHETHER IF HE DID, HIS PERSONAL SACRIFICE WOULD NOT BE IN VAIN.

5. AS TO HIS CHANCE TO GET THE REQUIRED MAJORITY, I SAID THAT EVEN IF HIS VOTE COUNT FOR HIMSELF AND GOMEZ BERGES ON THE FIRST ROUND WAS CORRECT - SOMETHING I WAS UNABLE TO JUDGE - HE NEEDED ONLY TO TAKE A LOOK AT THE UNCOMMITTED COUNTRIES TO FIND OUT THAT HE HAD LITTLE CHANCE TO GET ANY OF THEM TO VOTE FOR HIM. WHILE THE US GOVERNMENT HAD THE HIGHEST SYMPATHY AND REGARD FOR HIS PROFESSION EXPERTISE AND HIS POSITION AS DEAN OF ALL FOREIGN MINISTERS, PARAGUAY HAD BEEN TOLD REPEATEDLY IN WASHINGTON THAT THE US WOULD GO ALONG WITH THE LATIN AMERICAN

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CONSENSUS AND WOULD NOT SUPPORT ANY CANDIDATE AT THIS TIME. AS FOR THE OTHER UNCOMMITTED COUNTRIES, PARAGUAY, ESPECIALLY AFTER THE QUITO MEETING, IS A RED FLAG AND I DOUBTED VERY MUCH THAT HE COULD COUNT ON ANY OF THE UNCOMMITTED VOTES.

6. AS FAR AS HIS USEFULNESS TO THE OAS, MY PERSONAL VIEW WAS THAT HIS PRESENCE WOULD BE DIVISIVE RATHER THAN

HEALING AND THAT EVEN IF HE WERE ELECTED COUNTRIES LIKE MEXICO, VENEZUELA, COLOMBIA, COSTA RICA WOULD DO THEIR BEST TO UNDERMINE HIS POSITION AND THE INSTITUTION. HIS PERSONAL REPUTATION BUILD UP OVER 19 YEARS AS FOREIGN MINISTER WOULD SUFFER BY ATTACKS ON PARAGUAY'S RIGHT WING POSITION. HE MIGHT EVEN BE SLANDERED AS THE PUPPET OF THE UNITED STATES AND I DOUBTED VERY MUCH THAT THERE WOULD BE ANY GLORY FOR HIM OR PARAGUAY IN HAVING THE JOB.

7. AS HIS OLD FRIEND (I HAVE KNOWN SAPENA PASTOR SINCE 1957), MY PERSONAL VIEW WAS THAT IF HE COULD FIND A WAY TO BOW OUT GRACEFULLY HE WOULD NOT ONLY HELP HIMSELF BUT WOULD HELP THE FUTURE OF THE INSTITUTION. WHILE PROBABLY NO OTHER MAN OF HIS STATURE COULD BE FOUND FOR THE JOB, A CANDIDATE REPRESENTING A LESS CONTROVERSIAL NATION WOULD BE IN A BETTER POSITION TO HEAL AND STRENGTHEN THE OAS.

8. SAPENA PASTOR SAID THAT MY VIEWS MATCHED HIS OWN COMPLETELY BUT BEFORE MAKING ANY FINAL DECISION OR TALKING TO PRESIDENT STROESSNER HE WOULD LIKE TO OBTAIN AN OFFICIAL INDICATION FROM THE US AS TO HIS USEFULNESS.

9. COMMENT: I BELIEVE SAPENA PASTOR HAS COME TO THE CONCLUSION THAT HE CANNOT WIN AND THAT THE TEN VOTES HE PRESENTLY HAS ARE GOOD ONLY FOR THE FIRST ROUND AND WILL EVAPORATE QUICKLY. HIS GREATEST PROBLEM IS HOW TO EXPLAIN ALL THIS TO PRESIDENT STROESSNER WHO WOULD LIKE DEARLY TO PALM HIM OFF ON THE OAS. I THINK THE TIME HAS COME FOR SAPENA TO UNDERSTAND THAT ANY IDEA THAT HIS CANDIDACY MIGHT BE USEFUL TO THE US IS NOT VALID. I THINK THAT IF HE GETS NO ENCOURAGEMENT FROM US AT THIS TIME AND UNLESS STROESSNER ORDERS HIM TO DO OTHERWISE, HE WILL
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PROBABLY QUIT THE RACE GIVING HIS WIFE'S ILLNESS AS A PERFECTLY JUSTIFIED REASON. END COMMENT:

10. ACTION REQUESTED: I WOULD APPRECIATE A QUICK REPLY. I THINK AT THIS STAGE HE WILL TAKE ANY SUGAR-COATED PILL.
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